

The Humaneness of Lincoln

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LINCOLN STATUE IN NEWARK
Is a popular play spot for the children

JUST how much misery has been caused by inhumaneness can never be told since the dumb animal has no language in which to record its suffering but we do know that gentleness, mercy and kindness toward the dumb and helpless are attributes of true nobility and that the character of Abraham Lincoln exemplified these attributes.

Lincoln, the boy, was tender; Lin-

coln, the youth, was sympathetic and Lincoln, the man, was merciful. History abounds with the humaneness of this great soul and his life proves that humanity and humaneness go hand in hand.

Abraham Lincoln was born at Hodgenville, Larue County, Kentucky, on February 12, 1809, the son of Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. His birthplace was a crude, log

cabin in the midst of the wilderness and his boyhood years were filled with the hardships of frontier life. At ten years of age he was walking nine miles a day to and from the little log schoolhouse and at night he would stretch himself on the cabin floor and read the books that he had borrowed from his distant neighbors. He worked hard, even as a boy, but he realized that knowledge would unlock the mysteries of the earth and all of his spare time was spent in an endeavor to master his studies and learn from books.

The mother of Lincoln was a sweet and kindly influence in his life, and he worshipped her memory with reverence, always referring to her as "My angel mother."

As was the custom in those pioneer days, the father and brothers of Lincoln were great trappers and hunters. As a matter of fact, animals and birds were the natural prey of man in those days since he depended upon their meat for food and their skins for clothing. But the boy Lincoln loved every living creature far too well to cause suffering or sorrow and would never accompany them upon their hunting trips. Whenever his father's hunting and trapping were referred to, Abe would explain, "If father had learned a little about reading and writing when he was a child he might not have wanted to kill so many foxes and coons and other things in the woods." The very first composition that he wrote in school was on the subject of Cruelty to Animals and took occasion to chide his companions for their thoughtless acts of cruelty.

Lincoln was the friend of every creature of fur and feather and we are told that he was especially devoted to his dog "Honey." He found this dog one very hot day when he was on

his way to the old mill with a sack of meal to be ground. The dog had a broken leg and had been abandoned by its owner. Leaving the heavy sack of meal for the time being, Abraham picked up the little dog and carried him to a nearby spring where he bathed the injured leg and gave him fresh water to drink. Then he took him home and put the leg in a splint and made a nice, clean bed for him in a shady place. The two became devoted friends. Honey accompanied him on all of his errands and would stand patiently by until each task was completed. Then they would go blithely home through the woods together, Abe whistling a merry tune and the dog running back and forth in a perfect frenzy of joy. One time when they were out walking together Abe got caught in a cave between two rocks. He could not free himself and Honey, sensing the danger, ran home and barked so loud and furiously that a searching party accompanied him to the cave and his master was rescued.

Whenever Honey did wrong Lincoln would reprove him kindly and gently for he realized that animals, like human beings, often do wrong because they do not know any better and that gentle words of kindness will correct the fault when harsh words and accusations fail. Honey loved and trusted his master because of his tender kindness and Lincoln in turn prayed each night that God would make Honey a good dog. This childish prayer of Lincoln's has an irresistible appeal—"God help mother, help father, help sister, help everybody; teach me to read and write; watch over Honey and make him a good dog and keep us all from getting lost in the wilderness. Amen."

It will be recalled that the Lincoln family migrated from Kentucky to Illinois with numerous other families.

They made the journey by ox team traveling as far as possible during the day and camping near a stream or other water supply as evening came on. One morning, after a night beside a wide but quiet and shallow creek, the cavalcade awoke to find that a slight skim of ice had formed during the night and spanned its surface from shore to shore. One by one the families drove their teams through the chilly waters until all had crossed.

Then a little yellow dog rushed down to the edge of the water on the far side of the stream. While the camp had been breaking up this little dog had gone into the woods and had not noticed the departure of the pioneers. When he did return all had gone. Not daring to cross, he began to beg help by barking but not one had time or cared to wet his feet for a dog. There were already too many dogs in the camp. No one had time for this four legged little creature, at least no one but a lank little fellow known as Abe Lincoln. He heard its cries. Try as he could, he could not stop his ears to the plaintive call. So amid the derision of his fellow travelers he removed his boots, rolled up his trousers and waded across to the other bank. Gathering the little dog in his arms he quickly returned and resumed his place in the pioneering band. Among all that company not one name has been preserved or is known to us but through his connection with the boy who faced ridicule for a little dog—the boy who grew into manhood as Abraham Lincoln.

All through life, Lincoln stood ready to defend and protect the helpless. On one occasion he came upon a pig that was stuck in the mud. It had wandered out into a soft meadow and despite its struggles, was sinking

deeper and deeper. Lincoln had on his best clothes and at first determined not to bother with the pig, but after he had passed by he was overwhelmed with pity for the poor beast and went back and rescued it although his clothes were almost completely ruined by the slime and mud.

GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Another time, as a young lawyer, he was traveling on horseback with several of his companions through deep woods and across wide prairies. As they passed a grove of trees joyous with the song of birds, they noticed a fledgling which had fallen from the nest. They continued on their way but had gone only a short distance when Lincoln got down from his horse and going back to the place where the helpless little bird lay fluttering on the ground, lifted it tenderly and placed it on a branch near the nest. When he rejoined his companions one of them chided him for delaying the whole party for what he considered a mere trifle. "My friend," Lincoln replied, "I can only say this—that I feel better for it. I could not have slept tonight if I had left that helpless little creature to perish on the ground."

On another occasion when visiting General Grant's headquarters during the Civil War, he was attracted to three motherless kittens crawling on the floor. He took them up tenderly, soothed their piteous crying, and instructed one of the staff officers to

see that the little waifs were given plenty of good milk and treated with the utmost kindness. Lincoln had occasion to return to that office three or four times afterwards and each time he looked for the baby kittens and fondled them tenderly.

Kindness was the watchword of his nature and his associates were startled again and again in the stress of battle or in the confusion of his exacting political activities, to see him do some simple, kindly act toward man or beast.

Mothers whose sons were sacrificed in the war had much evidence of his kindness, tangible and otherwise; children who were made fatherless by the great struggle touched his heart strings and moved him to tears. Helpless himself, in the midst of their helplessness, he carried on what he knew to be a fight for humanity but he suffered keenly withal and could never seem to shake off the burden of another's sorrow. No one can read the Gettysburg address which appears in this leaflet without feeling the humaneness of this great soul.

Suggested Questions for the Teacher

1. Where and when was Abraham Lincoln born?
2. Who were his parents?
3. What kind of a home had they?
4. Was Lincoln a good student?
5. How did the family get food and clothing?
6. Did Lincoln hunt and trap?
7. Who was Honey?
8. Tell about the companionship of Lincoln and Honey.
9. How did Lincoln correct Honey's faults?
10. Recite Lincoln's boyhood prayer.
11. Tell the story of the pig in the mire.
12. The story of the little bird.
13. The story of the motherless kittens.
14. Tell the story of the little dog rescued by Lincoln.
15. What is considered the greatest speech in American History?
16. Name five attributes of Lincoln's character.
17. Which attribute do you think predominates?